

**SPINY LOBSTER FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE GULF OF
MEXICO AND SOUTH ATLANTIC
AMENDMENT 10**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
*DECEMBER 2011***

What are the changes to spiny lobster management resulting from Amendment 10?

- Four species of lobster have been removed from federal management.
- Annual catch limits (highest level of landings that is acceptable to maintain the spiny lobster stock) and catch targets (target level of landings) are established.
- The protocol for cooperation with Florida and the framework procedure (which allows for more timely implementation of routine regulatory changes) have been updated.
- Fishermen with tailing permits need to land spiny lobster all whole or all tailed, and applicants for a tailing permit need either a federal spiny lobster permit or the Florida permits required for commercial lobster fishermen.
- Up to 50 Caribbean spiny lobsters under the minimum size limit and one per trap are allowed on board fishing vessels.
- Florida has authority to coordinate removal of derelict spiny lobster traps in federal waters.

What are the catch limits for spiny lobster?

- For the Caribbean spiny lobster the following are established:
 - The annual catch limit is 7.32 million pounds.
 - The annual catch target is 6.59 million pounds. If this level is exceeded, a review panel will determine if management changes are needed.
- Catch limits are required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Why were four species removed from the spiny lobster fishery management plan?

- In the process of developing new federal regulations, NOAA Fisheries Service and the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (Councils) reviewed all of their fishery management plans to determine which species are still in need of federal management.
- The NOAA Fisheries Service and the Councils determined these species could be removed from federal management because low numbers are landed, and most of the catch is incidental to other fishing.
- Although these species are no longer under federal management, states can manage harvest of the species within federal waters adjacent to state waters.
- Florida regulations prohibit possession or harvest of egg-bearing females of any spiny or slipper lobster species, which gives greater protection than under federal management.

How will the regulations on the use of undersized attractants change?

- Previous regulations allowed up to 50 spiny lobsters or one per trap smaller than the minimum size limit to be retained aboard a vessel provided they are held in a live well.
- The new regulations are consistent with Florida regulations which allow 50 undersized spiny lobsters plus one per trap.

Why and how will the requirements for a Tail Separation Permit change?

- The previous requirements for obtaining the tailing permit did not restrict the permit to commercial fishermen, which is contrary to the Council's original intent.
- The new regulations require one of the following to obtain a Tail Separation Permit:
 - A valid federal spiny lobster permit (required for fishing in federal waters off states other than Florida).
 - A valid Florida Restricted Species Endorsement and a valid Crawfish Endorsement associated with a valid Florida Saltwater Products License to obtain a tailing permit (required for fishing in federal waters off Florida).
- Fishermen must land all lobsters from a trip either whole or tailed. This should discourage anyone from tailing a lobster to hide the fact that it is under the minimum size.

Will the public be able to retrieve or disable abandoned traps in federal waters?

- The Councils chose to delegate authority to clean up abandoned traps in federal waters to Florida, which has a trap cleanup program already in place.
- With prior authorization of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, community or citizens groups may retrieve abandoned traps as part of coastal cleanup events.
- Please visit the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Web site at <http://myfwc.com/fishing/saltwater/trap-debris/volunteer-program/> to learn more.

Are the Councils still considering closing areas to protect corals and requiring trap line markings?

- Yes, the Councils and NOAA Fisheries Service are developing Amendment 11 to the Spiny Lobster Fishery Management Plan to protect corals and require trap line markings.
- A biological opinion on the spiny lobster trap fishery requires these actions to address Endangered Species Act concerns.
 - Areas with valuable colonies of staghorn and elkhorn corals could be closed to all lobster fishing or just trap fishing. NOAA Fisheries is working with stakeholders to determine the best areas to close.
 - Unique color/markings for trap lines would be required for traps used in the lobster fishery. This will allow managers to determine which fishery to assign any endangered species encounters with trap lines.
- Amendment 11 should be completed before the next spiny lobster season begins in August 2012.

What does the framework procedure and Protocol for Enhanced Cooperative Management do?

- The Framework Procedure provides a mechanism for timely implementation of routine actions and a guideline for implementing such actions in a consistent manner.
- The new Procedure increases the flexibility of the Councils and NOAA Fisheries Service by identifying measures that can be changed under the procedure and clarifying the appropriate process needed for each type of change.
- The updated Protocol for Enhanced Cooperative Management outlines the roles of federal and Florida agencies in managing Caribbean spiny lobster. This process was outdated and needed to be updated.